

**BLM Nevada Statewide RAC Meeting
Elko Convention Center
October 20-21, 2005**

RAC Members Present:

Sierra Front-Great Basin RAC

Jerry Hepworth
Vern Schulze
Patricia Herzog
Rochanne Downs
Bill Roullier
John Dicks
James Eidel
John Falen
John Mudge
Ernest Paine
Sherm Swanson
Larie Trippet
D. Craig Young
John Gebhardt

Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC

Colleen Beck
Bob Maichle
Billie Young
John Hiatt
Steven Parker
Steve Mellington
John Weisser
Claire Toomey
Joni Eastley
Stretch Baker

Northeastern Great Basin RAC

Hank Vogler
Phyllis Jo Dean
Dave Gaskin
Sheri Eklund-Brown
Jon Hutchings
Art Gale
Vince Garcia
Dave Tattam
Bill Upton
Brent Howerton
Barry Perryman

BLM

Ron Wenker - State Director

Amy Lueders - Associate State Director

Gail Givens – Field Manager, Winnemucca

Elayn Briggs – Associate Field Manager, Carson City

Jerry Smith – Field Manager, Battle Mountain

Helen Hankins – Field Manager, Elko

Stephanie Connolly – Associate Field Manager, Ely

Jeff Weeks – Assistant Field Manager, Ely

Juan Palma – Field Manager, Las Vegas

Jo Simpson, Chief, Office of Communications, Nevada State Office

Meg Jensen, Deputy State Director, Lands and Planning, Nevada State Office

Del Fortner, Deputy State Director, Minerals Management, Nevada State Office

Chris Hanefeld, Public Affairs Specialist, Ely Field Office

Mike Brown, Public Affairs Specialist, Elko Field Office

Mark Struble, Public Affairs Specialist, Carson City Field Office

Jamie Thompson, Public Affairs Specialist, Winnemucca Field Office

Karen Eller, Administrative Support Assistant, Tonopah Field Station

Hillierie Patton, Public Affairs Specialist, Las Vegas Field Office

8:15 a.m. – Jo Simpson, Chief, Office of Communications, Nevada State Office, opened the meeting and introduced Ron Wenker, Nevada State Director.

Introductory Remarks - Ron Wenker

Wenker stated his appreciation of Resource Advisory Councils and that he values and relies on their advice. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Wenker commented that the budget continues to be a concern throughout BLM. Congress is mandating a rescission (reduction) from appropriated spending levels to help with the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina. With reduced funding, there is a greater need for employees to prioritize work and to find alternative methods to accomplish the work. For BLM, there is always more work to be performed than appropriated funding to cover all the work. That is why cooperative relationships and partnerships are critical to getting our work accomplished.

Several national priorities for FY'06 will impact Nevada:

- The National Energy Policy Act directs BLM to reduce the backlog of geothermal permits and streamline the permitting process.
- Work continues on the national programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) for utility corridors (ROWs) to meet energy transmission needs.
- There has been renewed interest in oil exploration in eastern Nevada, but no major oil fields have been discovered.
- Land health issues such as managing grazing, and reaching appropriate management levels (AML) for wild horses and burros in herd management areas, remain a priority for BLM. Setting AML for Nevada's herd management levels (HMAs) should be completed at the end of FY'06. BLM has three HMAs left in

Nevada to set and the U.S. Forest Service has one HMA left to set. After AML is set, then BLM can move forward and concentrate on managing AML for all its HMAs.

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined in FY'05 that listing of the sage grouse was not warranted, but agencies must practice good management and implement conservation plans to sustain sage grouse populations.
- Communities around the state continue to need land for urban growth and economic development.
- The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act has been so successful that other Nevada counties are trying to get legislation enacted using the guidelines as a model.
- Water transfer proposals will continue to be one of the major issues in the next few years, especially in eastern Nevada.
- Recreation and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on public lands are rapidly increasing and continue to present management challenges.
- It is very important for all concerned publics to engage in local land use planning and to be part of the answer, not the problem.
- BLM continues to be very committed to fire and fuels management, especially in the Great Basin Region.
- A new fire planning process looks at the whole landscape, not just a portion of it. All agencies—local, state and federal are participating.
- BLM and other agencies must continue to work cooperatively with local fire departments.

BLM Fiscal Year 2006 Priorities - Amy Lueders, Associate State Director

- The FY'06 budget outlook is flat.
- Managing our resources and protecting the health of the land are still priorities. BLM needs to continue to protect valuable habitat for all species.
- Grazing permits must be renewed by the end of fiscal year 2009.
- Tremendous progress has been made in setting appropriate management levels for wild horses and burros. Portions of Nevada are at or close to AML.
- Fire rehabilitation will be an important effort this coming year. BLM Nevada received about \$15 million for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation work for areas burned last summer.
- Partnerships continue to be critical to achieving BLM's mission.
- Recreation use continues to grow and affect all resources. Managing OHV use in high use areas is extremely critical.
- The Ely and Winnemucca field offices continue to work on their Resource Management Plans. BLM needs the public's continued involvement to refine the best methods in managing the public's land and resources.
- Nevada is a leader in geothermal energy development.
- BLM needs to continue to work with local communities to identify land disposal areas to help ease the burden of urban growth.
- Permitting of hard rock mines continues to be a priority to Nevada.

Questions and Answers:

Q. Larie Trippet, Sierra Front-Northwestern RAC member, asked Wenker if the travel management planning process would include designated OHV use?

A. Wenker answered yes. In certain cases, OHV use has been discontinued because of over use. With the public buying more recreation vehicles and recreating on public lands, it is creating an undue burden on the land.

Q. John Falen, Sierra Front-Northwestern RAC member, welcomed Wenker back to Nevada. He commented that he has been trying to buy 40 acres of BLM-administered land, which BLM listed suitable for disposal. The process has been slow. (Falen read letter from Winnemucca field office.) He asked Wenker if the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) process could be expedited?

A. Wenker responded that BLM conducts land sales through different authorities. FLTFA is just one sales authority. Field offices dispose of public land based on input from the counties as to what the county would like to see made available.

-Lueders commented that BLM is looking at ways to expedite land sales and acquisitions. Over the last five years, land disposals in Nevada have exceeded acquisitions: 96,500 acres sold, 43,500 acres acquired.

Q. Laura Crane, Sierra Front-Northwestern RAC member, commented that with the length of time necessary to process a land disposal, the public loses interest and looks for other avenues. BLM is losing potential customers because the process takes too long.

A. Lueders suggested the public utilize conservation easements.

-Bill Rouiller, Sierra Front-Northwestern RAC member, suggested that BLM seek out partners such as The Nature Conservancy to help streamline the process. This would free up specialists' time to focus on the resource programs.

-Lueders commented that if you bring in partners, perhaps you can create a cost recovery account. Ely field office has numerous examples.

Q. Steve Parker, Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC member, asked how the Administration's rescission will affect BLM ?

A. Lueders responded that all programs/departments were cut two percent.

Q. Falen questioned if BLM could use funds from FLTFA to employ temporary help?

A. Lueders believes that BLM could use those funds to get help to speed up the land disposal process.

Q. Jerry Hepworth, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member, asked Wenker if BLM could take a look at streamlining the permitting process for mining.

A. Wenker responded that BLM continues to review its permitting process.

Q. Sheri Eklund-Brown, Northeastern Great Basin RAC member, asked what the challenges are for BLM in getting the work done with budget reductions?

A. Wenker responded that BLM is finding ways to get the work done, with the highest priority task being done first.

Q. Sherm Swanson, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member, inquired about the agency's fire planning process. Namely, cheat grass creates high fire frequency. Will this problem be addressed?

A. Wenker commented that BLM has local plans in place with direction to continue to use fire as a management tool. Prescribed burns will be monitored to achieve directives. It's a cautious balance when you use fire as a management tool. In managing fire positions with budget constraints, the focus needs to be on the resources at risk.

Q. One RAC member asked when will BLM's web sites be available to the public (i.e., LR2000 which has been unavailable since July 2005)?

A. Simpson responded that the BLM disconnected the Internet to strength the security of the data. The BLM National web page is back on-line, but a definite date has not been announced as to when the rest of BLM's Internet will be back on-line.

Q. Rochanne Downs, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member, asked how BLM is going to work with, interact with Native American Tribes?

A. Wenker said his goal is to get around the state to meet everyone as soon as possible. BLM recognizes that Native Americans have sacred areas, and trust responsibility is a part of BLM's mission.

Q. John Mudge, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member, asked what the RACs can do for BLM Nevada?

A. Wenker suggested that RAC members work within their RAC to give BLM advice on all topics of importance. The presentations that the Deputy State Directors (DSDs) are about to make should clarify the RACs' roles.

9:35 a.m. Break

9:50 a.m. Meeting reconvened.

BLM Nevada Programs Outlook for FY 2006 and Accomplishments for FY 2005

Minerals - Del Fortner, Deputy State Director, Minerals Management (see attachments 1-1, NV BLM, Minerals Management; 1-2, 12/05 Oil and Gas Sale Parcels; and 1-3 Minerals and Energy Development on BLM lands – Benefits for Nevada Counties)

Fortner commented that the work is in the field offices

- Hundreds of old mine sites exist on public land that need to be fenced or backfilled for safety reasons. These are sites that were mined before any current regulations were in effect to prevent such abandonment without remediation. BLM Nevada partnered with the State of Nevada, Division of Minerals the past several years. To date, the accomplishments are as follows:
 - 50 shafts near towns have been backfilled.
 - Nationally, BLM remediated 930 acres of abandoned mine lands and water quality projects--over 700 acres are in Nevada.
 - BLM in cooperation with Southern Nevada Off-Road Enthusiasts (SNORE) and the State of Nevada, Division of Minerals, completed a

public service announcement to warn the public and particularly OHV riders of the dangers of AMLs.

- 59 sites near the ghost town of Rhyolite are scheduled to be reclaimed this year.
- Several major mine sites projects have been reclaimed.
- BLM Nevada conducted four oil and gas competitive lease sales; 517 leases were issued.
- 800 parcels will be available in the December 2005 oil and gas lease sale.
- Nevada leads the nation in geothermal energy production. Nevada will eliminate its backlog of permits this year.
- Mineral materials revenues for Nevada in FY 05 were \$22.6 million-- the largest program among the public land states. Nevada provides sufficient quantities of mineral materials to local and state governments through free use permits.
- Las Vegas field office is the biggest seller for mineral materials.
- Mining law administration – Nevada is the third largest producer in the world, behind South Africa and Australia.
- Nevada expects that the processing of Notices will increase 15-20 percent.
- Nevada holds over \$800 million in reclamation bonds for 3809 Plans of Operations Notices.
- Over one-half of the BLM's active mining claims are in Nevada.
- Four years of backlog for bond adjudication was eliminated six months ago. Policy is now to adjudicate bonds within 30 days.
- BLM established NEPA guidelines regarding 3809 Regulations.
- BLM improved its cost recovery service.
- Encouraging sustainable development of sites where mining has concluded is Fortner's goal for FY'06. Gail Givens, Winnemucca field manager and Jerry Smith, Battle Mountain field manager are excellent leadership examples for sustainable development.
- The revised National Energy Policy Act will be a driver. There are still lots of reports and deadlines. Nevada is waiting for direction from the Washington Office to adjust workload priorities.

Fortner is looking forward to working with all three Nevada RACs.

Fire - Kevin Hull, State Fire Management Officer, Office of Fire and Aviation

- 2005 preparedness - initial attack fires are burning approximately 1,000 acres.
- In 2005, 782 fires burned in Nevada, which burned over one million acres.
- Fire spread so quickly this past summer because of heavy fuels.
- For 2006, fuels will be extreme and lightening can't be stopped.
- Grant funding continues to be distributed to rural fire departments.
- Nevada is competitive to receive FY06 money.
- Anticipate 27,000 acres of treatments in Nevada for FY2006.
- BLM is pro-active in the community assistance program assessment plan. It is a federal initiative with fire agencies across the state.
- Prescribed burns will be conducted this fiscal year.

Renewable Resources - Meg Jensen, Deputy State Director, Resources, Lands, Planning
Jensen commented that BLM deeply appreciates the RACs' advice and recommendations. She would like to take this opportunity to highlight five areas where the RACs could help in FY'06.

1. **Land use planning/wilderness management planning.** BLM has an ongoing effort to update its land use plans, some which are very outdated. Ely is far along in the planning stage, Winnemucca is just starting. Las Vegas is quite involved in the wilderness planning process.
2. **Sage grouse conservation planning.** After five years of working on statewide conservation plans, the plans are complete. There are 48 throughout the state. Jensen believes BLM is now ready to move the effort forward for sage grouse.
3. **Travel management planning.** Wenker spoke earlier about travel management planning. A small team from the field offices developed consistent data standards for all field offices. This includes the same data collection techniques (inventory and designation).
 - Sand Mountain and Hungry Valley are two sites in particular where BLM needs to inventory the areas to better manage the sites
4. **Monitoring.** A pilot project for the Great Basin Restoration Initiative is being conducted at Owyhee Uplands near Elko. The idea of the project is to support local sage grouse conservation projects across state lines to conserve sage grouse in those areas. This should improve BLM's capacity to monitor more effectively. The Nevada Monitoring Handbook is currently being revised by BLM, U.S. Forest Service, Nevada Department of Agriculture, UNR College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Nevada Farm Bureau and Nevada Wool Growers.
4. **Rights-of-Ways.** BLM realizes that water transfer projects and power transmission lines are of great concern to the RACs and to the public. The map provided to the RACs shows ROWs that have been issued. The new National Transmission Corridor EIS will be similar to the Wind Energy EIS (see attachment 2).

Q&As

Q. Hank Vogler, Northeastern Great Basin RAC member, stated his concern for energy development. Appears there are huge acreages with potential for renewable energy (e.g., pinyon/juniper), and he wonders if there is any proposed biomass projects in the works?

A. Hull explained that BLM has offered biomass projects for the last two years for stewardship projects.

Jensen commented that there has to be enough fuels to pay off the required investment.

-Hiatt commented that BLM has been waiting on the RMPs to get done. The BLM needs to get going to keep the public interested. What can the RACs do to help?

-Jensen commented that BLM is trying to complete project plans at the local level. Nevada received a sizable amount of funding and we should see results on the ground.
-Helen Hankins, Elko field manager, clarified that Ely still has an RMP in place until the Record of Decision is signed on the Ely RMP. The work still can go on.

Q. Jim Eidel, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member, asked with the new plans, will the existing corridors still be used?

A. Jensen affirmed, most definitely.

Q. Downs asked about prescribed burns and pinyon-pine nuts.

A. Elayn Briggs, Carson City associate field manager, responded that BLM will protect the resource.

-Vogler commented that thinning the trees to use as biomass for burning, would result in increased pine nut production.

Cooperative Monitoring of Rangelands in Nevada - Rick Orr, Caliente field station manager

The Northeastern Great Basin RAC asked Orr to give a presentation on cooperative rangeland monitoring (see attachments 3-1 and 3-2). Sherm Swanson, Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC member and UNR College of Agriculture professor, is leading the update of the handbook. There is a collective set of monitoring procedures that can be used. Hankins asked the group to set up a protocol, but it is difficult to gather data. Swanson indicated the Northeastern Great Basin RAC is developing a verification process. The state agriculture specialists and federal range management specialists are developing a Nevada Range Management School, is the key to monitoring its education. The group would like to ask all RAC members to come up with suggestions to present to the state director to implement cooperative rangeland monitoring.

Swanson discussed ideas about protocols and collecting this information in an appropriate manner. The update of the handbook focuses on objectives that can be accomplished in local areas, that can be developed to focus on people and that adapt to management over time. Swanson suggested that the protocols that worked from the old handbook be maintained to build on existing data.

Falen commented that all of these efforts do not do any good if we don't implement the monitoring. BLM should be able to get enough rancher participation to implement.

Eidel asked what went wrong with the Forest Service's cooperative rangeland monitoring? Was there a quality control system built in? Eidel agreed with Falen that ranchers must be involved.

Vogler commented that the Forest Service's monitoring failed because they had all the tools but wouldn't implement. Water was the big focus with them, which had nothing to do with monitoring.

Hankins reminded RAC members that BLM doesn't have the capacity to monitor by itself. It is of value for the permittee to monitor, as it serves as a bargaining tool. The information can be used by BLM to make decisions to sustain multiple uses.

Orr pointed out the objectives of this analysis (see attachment). Orr commented on how a change in management will affect the objectives.

One member asked what data the BLM would accept?

Hiatt responded that someone has to be responsible to keep the data over a very long time for it to be useable. BLM will have to step up to the plate and make sure the database is available to ranchers and other interested parties.

Orr stated there were three phases to the monitoring plan:

- Training/certification
- Establish pilot programs then show success in entire process
- Emphasize data verification

11: 30 a.m. - Simpson instructed all RAC members to break out as Pods to give BLM a report on issues and concerns the members have regarding BLM Nevada.

2:00 p.m. – The three RACs reconvened in general session.

Pod 1 – Commercial Users Group

Hank Vogler – Spokesperson

- BLM should use a formal arbitration process to resolve conflicts.
- Work processes (e.g., application for range improvements) need improvement.
- BLM should be proactive instead of reactive.
 - BLM should implement a pre-approval process in place to use contractors to perform work. BLM needs to hire contractors for a longer duration.
 - Interdisciplinary team should be committed through the end of the project.
- Never say you don't have enough people or resources.
 - Use contractors
 - Review processes by BLM
 - Need to move quickly
 - Keep improving the streamlining process (learn from private industry)
 - Run the agency like a business
- Ensure the Land Use Plans are a work in progress, as they change constantly.
- When will BLM issue guidelines for 3809-Cost Recovery?
- Transportation security.
- Cumulative issues are associated with OHV use. BLM needs a motorized plan in place and funding for the plan.
- Change 1872 mining law.
- Suspend grazing fees.
- Open the canopy created by pinyon/juniper (by mechanical thinning).

Pod 2 – Conservation Group

John Hiatt – Spokesperson

- Group wants to emphasize that the public needs to learn how to use and respect public lands or future generations will see impoverished public lands.
- Transfer of water rights to major urban areas is becoming an issue all over the state.
- BLM needs to be proactive if it wants to have a say in what happens in the next 20-30 years. BLM needs to inform the public.
- State law prohibits new stockwater rights for BLM.
- BLM needs to be proactive in the management of its wild horses and burros instead of always being in a crisis management mode. BLM Nevada needs to achieve Appropriate Management Level and maintain it.
- OHVs –
 - OHV use is related to invasive plants
 - Need statewide policies
 - Important to think regionally
 - Need to identify resources/areas that need protection
 - Need special designation loops
 - Need more management control than Special Recreation Permits
 - Need to develop statewide travel policies and guidelines to plan for the future and maintain current trails
 - Need well-defined areas for OHV travel to protect wildlife.
- Fire management – the removal of pinyon/juniper is proper for fuels treatment. Fuels treatment needs to be addressed.
- BLM needs to look at whole habitat as proper functioning “desired” condition
- Look at establishing a sustainable disturbance regime.
- Grazing/Riparian areas – Need to be monitored, especially in the riparian zone.
 - Need to achieve proper functioning condition for grazing.
- Cultural Resources need to be protected. BLM needs to complete inventories around the state.
 - Need the introduction of a statewide data monitoring tracking system.
 - Track damages and frequency to site(s).
 - Recruit volunteers to be site stewards.
- Need to analyze impacts of utility and energy industrialization association and its impacts on access roads and sites.
- Urban growth – how is BLM going to manage for growth while managing the resources?
- Environmental education is needed. BLM needs to be proactive.
- Project impacts to be considered.

Pod 3 – Other Interest Groups

- Provide Tonopah field station with additional realty specialists to manage Nye County realty actions and consolidate the southern portion of the county into Battle Mountain district.

- Continue working on a statewide travel designation management plan that protects resources, provides for multiple-use and provides a quality recreational experience for all user groups.
 - Plan to include a public and transparent inventory and monitoring process and an education component
 - Provide adequate law enforcement
- Continue and increase outreach efforts to local government and agencies, user groups, civic organizations, individuals, etc., in all decision-making processes to ensure full and complete public involvement.
- Expedite the land disposal process through FLTFA and other avenues.

3:00 p.m. - **Public Comment Period**

Ralph McMullen, Executive Director, Elko Convention Center

McMullen commented that he and the folks at the convention center have a great working relationship with BLM and the FS. Seven years ago, both agencies had a negative image in Elko County. With the forward thinking of BLM management and staff, this image has been turned around. McMullen wanted to take this opportunity to thank the BLM via public comment.

Recreation tourism industry – Adventures on the Edge. Invited others to come enjoy our recreation and use the public lands.

McMullen was delighted to see Spruce Mountain EA was resolved in a positive manner.

Three things the public wants when they visit other areas: watchable wildlife, scenic views, and historical sites. We all need to reach a fair balance, that we can protect and use.

The California Interpretive Trail visitor center is one success story that will definitely help tourism.

Wenker thanked McMullen for his comments and great hospitality at the convention center.

Panel Discussion:

Lueders introduced members of the panel discussion on Rights-of-Way Applications for transfer of groundwater: Ken Albright, Director of Resources, Southern Nevada Water Authority; Jason Keene, State Engineer's Office; Bruce Flinn, BLM Project Manager; and Mike Strobel, U.S. Geological Service.

Kevin Albright, Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) (see attachment 4)
 -SNWA acquires water for the Las Vegas valley. SNWA removes water from the Colorado River, cycles through treatment plants then returns to the Colorado River. The SNWA Board defines water resources for the portfolio and the priorities for use which are reviewed annually and revised as necessary. Due to the growth of Las Vegas and the surrounding area, additional water resources other than the Colorado River are needed. These resources are available within our own state in the form of unused groundwater and unused surface water in neighboring counties. SNWA has been working 16 years on securing some of this unused water.

-Nevada's economy and people's jobs, depend upon a reliable water supply in Southern Nevada.

-SNWA water resource planning has a long-term goal of a more balanced mix of Colorado River water and non-Colorado River water. Some of the avenues SNWA is exploring include:

- Emphasizing local water conservation and drought response.
- Developing unused, non-Colorado River water supplies in Nevada.
- Pursuing other water supplies, wherever practical.

The Water Resource Portfolio includes:

Colorado River Resources

- Nevada Basic Apportionment
- Return Flow Credits
- Surpluses/Interim Surplus
- Unused Apportionment (AZ/NV)
- Arizona Water Bank
- California water bank
- Southern Nevada water bank
- Transfers/Exchanges

Non-Colorado River Resources

- Las Vegas Valley Groundwater
- Las Vegas Valley Shallow Aquifer
- Las Vegas Valley Reclaimed Groundwater
- Conservation/Drought Response
- In-State Non-Colorado River Water
 - Muddy River
 - Virgin River
 - Groundwater in Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties

-Southern Nevada has made significant conservation gains.

-In-state resources being developed are Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties' groundwater development; Three Lakes Valley groundwater development and the Virgin/Muddy rivers surface water development.

-In-state resource development is still in its early stages. SNWA is committed to working with local communities to address local concerns. SNWA has reached out to neighboring counties and other stakeholders to identify issues and concerns.

Jason Keene, State Engineer's Office

-Keene explained the State Engineer's role in the transfer of water rights. All groundwater is appropriated by the State Engineer's Office.

-If unappropriated water is available at the site, applicant must prove beneficial use.

Bruce Flinn - BLM Project Manager for the Southern Nevada Groundwater Project.

- The Ely field office is currently working on four rights-of-way applications (one from Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), and three from Lincoln County Water District).
- The Kane Springs project for Lincoln County includes five to seven wells and less than 10 miles of pipeline to bring water to the Coyote Springs development area. The project would include 20+ wells and over 30 miles of pipeline to bring water to the new development in Lincoln County north of Mesquite.
- The SNWA project includes over 150 wells and over 230 miles of pipeline from White Pine County to Clark County. In June 2005, Lincoln County filed a parallel (to the SNWA pipeline) rights-of-way application with BLM in Lincoln County. Lincoln County may withdraw this application if agreement can be reached with SNWA to transport the water within Lincoln County utilizing the SNWA pipeline.
- BLM Nevada has determined that a new management structure for the project is necessary and they have hired a new project manager (Penny Woods) who will report directly to the Nevada State Director. She will report in December 2005.

Mike Strobel - USGS Nevada Deputy State Director

- Strobel briefly explained the BARCASS study, which deals with water resources of the basin and range carbonate aquifer system. The present study was started last year by USGS and Desert Research Institute. It is a three-year study funded by the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act. The study will use existing data to evaluate the approximate volume of water stored in aquifers. BARCASS will NOT produce a calibrated transient ground water flow model. It will directly address groundwater development or water resources.

Lueders opened the floor to questions and comments to the panel from the RACs.

Q. John Mudge: Is there going to be a numeric model?

A. Ken Albright: Lots of money invested in creating a numeric model. The pipeline will be shared with Lincoln County.

Q. Swanson asked Strobel if there were any timeframes for analyzing data?

A. Strobel replied that USGS would compare data and impacts of the past two decades.

Q. Vogler commented that several creeks are now completely dry. Need to thin pinyon/juniper where it is encroaching on the landscape. What if springs dry up and he can no longer ranch?

A. Albright replied that SNWA is working on some funding to conduct this type of work. SNWA is monitoring all pumping and will move the pumping centers around to ensure water doesn't dry up. SNWA has put model together to submit to the State Engineer's Office. You cannot have production without monitoring.

-Mitigation package

Springs, endangered species long term protection

Process is there for long-time survival

-Jason Keene – include the ability to reduce pumping or eliminate altogether.

-Bruce Flinn – Piece to the complex puzzle – water monitoring outside of the EIS process.

Q. Vogler asked what would we do about water in 10 years if Las Vegas valley continues to grow? There would be long-term impacts and concerns.

A. Albright responded that no state or federal money would be used to build these programs. The money would come from revenues from new growth.

Q. John Weisser, Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC member, asked if there was a possibility of getting a model to project how much Las Vegas can grow before the plan fails?

A. Albright commented that water does not fuel growth.

Q. Eidel inquired as to what would happen if the water dries up?

A. Albright noted the plan allows for lowering of water levels. Monitoring wells are in place, and pumping data and monitoring data is being collected.

Q. Eidel commented that historically, water levels are drawn down when pumped for an extended period. What is the state going to do to assure it won't happen again?

A. Albright noted this would be done with water withdrawals.

Vince Garcia, Northeastern Great Basin RAC member, asked Keene, what if other counties see water rights not being used and the rights are purchased. How will the State Engineer's office handle this?

A. Keene answered that water rights would be processed in the order they are filed.

Lueders concluded the Q&A session and thanked all members of the water panel for taking time to come to discuss such an important issue.

4:45 p.m. Lueders adjourned meeting for the day.

Friday October 21, 2005

7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Individual RAC meetings to elect chair and vice-chair and set dates, locations and major topics to be addressed for FY'06 meetings.

11:35 a.m. – All three RACs convene for joint session and close out in Turquoise Room.

Northeastern Great Basin RAC

Elected Chair, Vince Garcia, and Vice-Chair, Hank Vogler

Meeting dates and agenda topics for 2006:

- February 16, Battle Mountain: Land tenure, sage grouse, Shoshone Range OHV Trail System
- April 27, Eureka: No agenda set.
- June 15, Ely: Comments on Ely RMP
- August 17-18, Wells: Spruce Mountain, and tour and meeting concerning California Interpretive Trail.

RAC members defined issues/tasks for 2006 (see attachment): Cooperative monitoring pilot, Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition (GBRI) update, Ely RMP, Shoshone Range OHV system, Land Use Plan Amendment for land tenure with mines, Sage Grouse conservation implementation plans update, Travel Management Planning for Spruce Mountain, Oil and Gas exploration potential in Elko and Battle Mountain. Fencing in the checkerboard land around subdivisions and providing for green stripping around an area.

Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC

-Election of Chair, John Gephardt, and Vice-Chair, Larie Trippet

-RAC decided to only have two meetings this year, with extensive involvement from the subgroups, especially the EIS subgroups.

Meeting dates and agenda items:

March 2-3, 2006 – Cheat grass removal,

June 28-29, 2006 - Winnemucca RMP, NCA/Black Rock Wilderness Implementation Plan

Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC

Election of Chair, Steve Mellington and John Hiatt, Vice-Chair

RAC wants to make a concerted effort to limit projects, but assure that products come out of their efforts. Top three agenda items for discussion are:

- Gold Butte area - Develop management guidelines to protect cultural resources, but still allow for recreation.
- Ely RMP
- Strategy to take care of Rhyolite Ghost town

The following subcommittees have been formed this year: Invasive plants (includes Cooperative Rangeland Monitoring), wild horses and burros, and processing land sales.

State Director Wenker thanked all RAC members and the public for attending the meeting. BLM values the advice and time each individual devotes to the RAC. Today's BLM is in the forefront, and the advice the RACs provide help BLM eliminate litigation. BLM continues to seek more advice, volunteers and partnerships to continue to operate.

Wenker noted that the priorities and topics the RACs' are taking on for the coming year are right on track and ambitious.

1:00 p.m. There being no further business, Vogler moved to adjourn meeting.
 Young seconded.

Wenker adjourned meeting.

Minutes Approved by: s/Ron Wenker

Ron Wenker, State Director, Nevada

Date: March 27, 2006

Attachments

- 1-1 BLM Nevada Minerals Management Outlook for FY 2006 (6 pp)
- 1-2 December 2005 Oil & Gas Sale Parcels
- 1-3 Minerals and Energy Development on BLM Lands (9 pp)
- 2 Handout – West-wide Energy Corridor Programmatic EIS
- 3-1 Cooperator Monitoring Plan: Outline & Tasks (2 pp)
- 3-2 Developing an Implementation Protocol for Cooperative Rangeland Monitoring (4 pp)
- 4 PowerPoint Presentation by Ken Albright, Southern Nevada Water Authority (9 pp)
- 5 Map of Proposed Project Facilities for Ground Water Pipelines (1 p)